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Chapter 1: Introduction. Psychological Governance and Public Policy.

Jessica Pykett, Rhys Jones and Mark Whitehead

The past two decades have seen concerted shifts in the rationales, techniques and methods of public policy making and governance which have been well-documented in social and political science (Rhodes, 1997; Newman 2001; Bovaird and Löffler, 2003; Le Grand 2003). Since at least the late 1990s, there has been an increased policy emphasis on enhancing citizen involvement in government, through personalising responsibility, tailoring public services to citizen-consumers, and co-producing policy in dialogue with representative communities. These changes have been particularly marked in the UK. Yet conversely we have also witnessed a move away from the traditional channels of representative parliamentary democracy towards the increasing dominance of expert and evidence-based policy based on ‘what works’ – trends prevalent in both the UK and USA (Sanderson, 2002). This has included more experimental forms of policy trialling, development and adaptation informed by ‘design thinking’ (Bason 2014) and ‘nudging’ people towards making decisions in their own best interests by shaping the environments in which decisions are made, and clearing the psychological ground for more rational behaviours (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). It is inspired by a perceived need to innovate, provide creative, future-proof solutions and adopt policies shaped around the needs, aptitudes and indeed technological and behavioural habits of service ‘users’. Such design thinking has been prominent in countries such as Denmark, Singapore and more recently in the UK, where the Government office for Science Foresight Team, the Cabinet Office Policy Lab and the Behavioural Insights Team have played key roles.

There is now also a sense within the policy making process that pragmatic, efficient and cost-effective policy change can and should be delivered through new forms of discursive forum and co-produced through participatory engagement with citizens (Mahony, 2010). This can work, for instance by getting the best experts in a room together and ‘workshopping’ ideas, rapid prototyping, agile development, local pilot projects and rolling out change through government innovation networks, perhaps communicated through stylish infographics and facilitated by market research companies, social marketers and communications agencies. Crucially, these new forms of public policy making represent citizen’s needs, values,

attitudes, preferences and behaviours to policy makers through specifically mediated channels such as through public opinion polling, focus group research or community consultation initiatives. Sometimes those mediators are academic researchers, perhaps giving evidence to parliamentary or presidential committees, conferences or proceedings. They might also be more self-organising groups such as political lobbyists, pressure groups, advocacy organisations or initiators of online petitions. But increasingly, it is a cadre of *behavioural* experts and consultants operating within the commercial or social enterprise sphere who are called upon to provide policy advice and contribute to policy strategy, design and implementation. In all these cases, considerable work goes into constructing authoritative claims to knowing how and why citizens behave in certain ways and how their behaviour can be changed in the course of addressing specific policy problems.

In this context, the ‘behaviour change industry’ has emerged as a body of actors – sometimes governmental, sometimes commercial, sometimes third sector organisations (and often a mixture of these) – who are skilled in identifying, delimiting, measuring, modelling, changing and evaluating the behaviour of individual citizens, communities or particular social groups. In particular this industry draws on the theoretical precepts and experimental methods associated with psychology, behavioural economics, neuroscience and a medical paradigm (e.g. Randomized Controlled Trials – see John, this volume) as both the rationale for and means of achieving specific public policy goals. This behaviour change industry has only recently grown in global significance, playing a crucial role in shaping psychological forms of governance. The notion of an emergent ‘industry’ denotes the work and effort that has been involved in the construction of contemporary formations of psychological governance.

This book considers the research, policy and practical challenges associated with psychological governance where behavioural change is posed as a means and end of liberal governance. We define psychological governance as forms of state-orchestrated public policy activity which are aimed at shaping the behaviour of individuals, social groups or whole populations. The book considers the varied scope and scale of psychological governance techniques and examines to what extent we can talk of a co-ordinated shift in governance as opposed to a pragmatic set of techniques for improving the efficacy of policy making in straightened financial times. Contributing authors provide analytical accounts of the wider political significance of psychological governance by investigating what kinds of knowledge

claims are made in support of it, its historical and sociological significance, how it operates and its methodological precepts, and its effects in terms of citizen-subject formation and framings of social and mental problems.

Psychological governance specifically denotes (public, commercial and/or non-governmental) interventions targeted at the interface of conscious and non-conscious thought and action, connecting emotional response and rational deliberation. As Chief Executive of the UK's Behavioural Insights Team, David Halpern, has described this interface:

“Behind the shroud of our consciousness, a myriad processes race to work out what is going on in the world around us, and how we should respond...our brains ceaselessly infer, overlay and interpret new information and memories. It's an incredible performance” (2015: 6)

On the one hand, while these cognitive heuristics are impressive basic human functions to be celebrated, it is clear that contemporary forms of psychological governance are focused on our human tendencies to get things wrong, make bad decisions, and deviate from the rational economic actor proposed in classical economic theory. Hence, for Halpern,

“[t]he limits of human cognitive capacities, and the naivety and failures of classical economic models, create a powerful case for more regulation and a more active state according to some” (Halpern, 2015: 6).

This means the state should orchestrate regulatory activity around a more complex and messier vision of the cognitive capacities of individuals, involving the redesign of government business around citizens, who in Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) terms are emotional *humans*, not rational *econs*. The notion of 'state-orchestration' does not suggest that a monolithic and authoritarian state is imposing such forms of intervention on an unsuspecting public, but refers to the explicit state support and development of psychological governance by nation states which we outline in the following section. The 'behaviour change industry' thus refers to a confluence of state and non-state actors, actually existing initiatives/policies/programmes, as well as a more fluid set of political ideas, agendas and

discursive practices which have risen in prominence globally since the turn of the 21st century.

Applying behavioural insights to public policy. A global agenda

There are several purposes for which national governments are currently mobilising psychological insights in the cultivation of specific behavioural responses amongst individual citizens and national populations, and evidence of behaviourally informed policy initiatives can be found in Australia, Denmark, Singapore, the UK, USA, and the Netherlands, with rumours afoot of moves to establish state-run behavioural insight teams in Germany, Italy and Canada. The UK's Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) established in 2010 has pioneered several public policy initiatives informed by behavioural science, aimed at changing citizen behaviours for the public good (for detailed histories of the BIT, see Halpern, 2015; Jones et al, 2013). These initiatives are extremely wide-ranging, and include: encouraging tax compliance; reducing missed hospital appointments; designing web-based public health campaigns; reducing drop-outs from adult literacy and numeracy skills programmes; reducing mobile phone theft; increasing the likelihood of Army Reservists to complete the application process; increasing diversity in the police force; encouraging illegal migrants at Home Office reporting centres to voluntarily return home; changing job centre processes to harness job seekers' commitments to find work, as well as a number of policy experiments in the fields of consumer protection, charitable giving and international development (BIT, 2015). This by no means exhaustive list could be supplemented by the interventions, governing cultures and practices which have been more indirectly shaped by the enthusiasm of national governments to support behaviour change as a paradigm for public policy reform.

The use of psychological knowledge in shaping conduct is thus by no means the preserve of national governments. Supra-national organisations such as the World Bank, World Economic Forum, OECD and European Union have also reported on the potential of behavioural economic and neuroscientific research to inform a wide range of policy areas, whilst international aid and development organisations have arguably long engaged in behaviour change interventions and communications projects in the areas of public health and

poverty alleviation. Nor are these behavioural interventions the preserve of state authorities. Advertisers, marketers, political campaigners, NGOs and charities have long drawn on psychological forms of expertise in their efforts to communicate with, capture the attention of and shape the choices of their audiences. More recently, the focus of such forms of expertise and techniques has been notably shifting towards the inner workings of the mind, with ‘neuromarketing’ consultancies promising services which can generate data on the embodied and psychophysiological responses of consumers to specific brands and products (see Schneider and Woolgar, 2012 for a critical review). Advertisements themselves have for instance been designed to respond to viewers’ attention using eye-tracking techniques; a common method in psychological research. Global behaviour change consultancies and social enterprises have emerged as important players within this industry, whilst many existing global consultancies have incorporated behavioural economics into their portfolio of services and knowledge bases (e.g. Deloitte, Gallup, KPMG, McKinsey, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, RAND Corporation). There is often a close relationship between such organisations, university research centres and government commissioned work (some examples include *Behaviour Change*, *Collaborative Change*, *National Social Marketing Centre*, *UCL Centre for Behaviour Change*, *Nudgeathon (Warwick Business School)* (UK); *iNudgeU* (Denmark); *GreenNudge* (Norway); *Irrational Labs*; *The Greatest Good* group (USA); *BEWorks* (Canada); *The Behavioural Architects*, *Ogilvy Change* (Global).

Aside from advertisers, the everyday citizen-shaping domains of schooling, work and urban/building design have also been shaped by psychological research (Pykett, 2015). This is further indication of the expansive and diffuse nature of psychological governance beyond the direct confines of ‘the state’. Schools have long been replete with educational practices based on developmental psychology, and this has been more recently complemented by programmes based on positive psychology (Seligman, 2011), theories of ‘growth mindsets’ (Dweck, 2006) and character strengths (Arthur, 2005), mindfulness and ‘neuroeducation’ (Huppert and Johnson, 2010; Howard-Jones, 2010). In workplaces, human resource management and employee training processes have been heavily shaped by organizational psychology, positive psychology again, psychometric testing and ‘organizational neuroscience’ (Becker et al., 2011). And in the fields of urban design and architecture, concerted efforts have been made to establish ‘neuroarchitecture’ as a distinct field of research and practice to build on the foundations of work from environmental psychology

and studies of spatial cognition to better design buildings and cities which respond to and potentially help to shape the psychological dimensions of human nature (Eberhard, 2009). These developments point both to the institutionalisation and formalisation of particularly psychological and biophysical accounts of human behaviour, as well as to the way in which such knowledge is also shaping governing practices within those institutions (schools, workplaces, planning/architecture) beyond the institutions of the state.

The challenges of psychological governance

It could be argued that these developments do not indicate anything particularly new about psychological governance or shaping citizenly conduct. Indeed the social and political uses of (European and North American) psychological knowledge since the late nineteenth century have been well-documented (Hearnshaw 1964; Rose, 1985; Bunn et al, 2001). Areas of psychiatry, education, social and family policy, criminality, military recruitment, training and post-conflict therapy, industrial management, Victorian self-improvement and population-based eugenic thinking have been notable in their focus on the setting of psychological norms, and the training, correction and governing of minds. Many scholars have outlined the close interconnection between the development of academic psychology, prevailing perceptions of societal problems and the status of clinical psychology as an applied profession. Meanwhile the historiography of psychology has itself come under much criticism for its naïve search for psychology's founding fathers and its own role in sustaining a psychological discourse (Jones and Elcock, 2001; Blackman 1994). In a radical rethinking of the history of psychology, Nikolas Rose argued that the development of psychology should not be understood as a progressive journey towards scientific truth and its subsequent application in practice, but rather that:

“[t]he conditions which made possible the formation of the modern psychological enterprise in England were established in all those fields where psychological expertise could be deployed in relation to problems of the abnormal functioning of individuals” (Rose, 1985: 3).

It turns out that it has long been ‘real’ social problems which have shaped the development of psychological science rather than a clear sense of scientific development as somehow separate from the ordinary concerns of society. The promise of an evidence-based policy driven by novel scientific insight is therefore rendered problematic.

This historical account throws into question the particular idea that ‘behavioural insights’ are simply applied to social and governmental problems as if they were straightforward manifestations of scientific evidence. Significant and historically contingent effort has been put into the assembling of the behavioural and decision-making sciences as sciences, through the establishment of accepted methodologies, international journals, research centres and funding. It is therefore essential that we consider the ways in which activities of psychological governance are studied in their broader social, cultural, political and economic contexts, for instance by tracing the intimate trajectories shared by neoliberal economic theories and developments in the brain and behavioural sciences (Jones et al., 2013; Pykett, 2013; Davies, 2015). Contemporary manifestations of psychological governance are connected with a particularly economised vision of psychology, drawing most heavily from the discipline of behavioural economics. Like any such account, this offers only a partial view of the complexity of human behaviour, emotion, perception, cognition, intention and action. It thus arguably provides little by way of cultural, social and political-economic explanation for how and why people behave in certain ways.

Elsewhere (Jones et al, 2013) we have outlined what we termed ‘the rise of the psychological state’ in light of evidence of the influence of the idea of ‘nudge’ and behavioural science literatures on UK policy strategy and policy making in several sectors including personal finance, environmental, and health policy. By approaching the psychological state as an anthropological phenomenon, we traced the specific enthusiasm for behavioural science explanations in policy strategy documents, white papers, think tank publications, in political discourse, by specific civil service personnel, political figures, research centres and highly publicised academics, and actually existing state practices around these three sectors. We described the appeal of ‘nudge’ inspired thinking and behavioural economic thought in particular to both the modernisation of New Labour’s proclaimed ‘missionary style’ of government, in the ascendance during the late 1990s, as well as to the 2010 Conservative-led coalition government’s emphasis on reducing bureaucracy and state expenditure. Since 2013

further evidence of the influence of the behavioural sciences on global national and supra-national government strategy and policy abounds, from both critical commentators and early advocates, as already described above.

In adopting the moniker of the ‘psychological state’, however, there is a risk of suggesting a rather caricatured critique of government intervention as if there is something untoward about using the latest scientific evidence as a basis for designing more cost-effective policies which take into account the real complexities of the human mind and behaviour. Some critics have indeed dismissed psychological governance as either too trivial to matter, or conversely as a radical threat to democracy achieved through malign manipulation and psychological control. However our position has been to narrate the emergence of the psychological state as a form of political reasoning; as a set of justifications and rationales given for taking particular courses of governmental action, targeting specific individuals and social groups, and for promoting certain kinds of intervention or indeed non-intervention in specific contexts. All of these forms of reasoning are highly contentious and it is therefore important to attempt to understand the stated rationales behind new behavioural policy making and delivery mechanisms, the foundational knowledge bases from which they derive a certain political legitimisation, and the potential unintended consequences of their application. Far from indicating a conspiracy to govern through expert knowledge on the mind, brain, behaviour (and its relation to economic decision-making), psychological forms of governance instead raise a set of fairly normal and normative questions around how the techniques, knowledges and sources of government action are being reshaped, how the citizen-subject is re-imagined through such techniques and how deliberations around whose and what values are to be promoted as public goods, social norms and collective decision making are re-worked.

Thus a useful starting point for this book is to consider the venture of the behavioural and decision making sciences themselves not as universal and univocal terrain but – as with science in general – a fluid and contestable set of knowledge-making practices which can be, and are used for a variety of political and economic ends. In the following sub-sections, we outline how this argument informs the structure of the book and describe the contributions of the chapters to three principal aspects of psychological governance. First we provide some commentary on the making of the discipline of behavioural economics which underpin notions of psychological governance – exploring key debates and discontinuities which have

implications for regulatory politics and state action. Secondly, we consider how such knowledges about the brain, mind and behaviour are connected with the particular forms of psychological governance described by the book's contributors. Thirdly, we outline how the chapters differently approach the exercise of psychological power, its methods, tools and techniques – exploring the implications of psychological governance for social practice and citizen identity. In the conclusion we return to the question of the political significance of psychological governance, introducing a final chapter by Peter John, who poses an important challenge to the critical perspectives offered throughout the book.

Making Behavioural Economics

At a basic level, the emergence of psychological governance in public policy is closely related to the development of an 'epistemic community' of behavioural scientists whose research, insights and expertise have become highly valued amongst policy strategists and policy makers, particularly in the UK and USA, but increasingly elsewhere. Epistemic community is a term used to describe "a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain" (Haas, 1992: 3). Within an epistemic community, members have a "shared belief or faith in the verity and the applicability of particular forms of knowledge or specific truths" (Haas, 1992), and are actively involved in producing and disseminating that knowledge to address policy problems (Meyer and Molyneux-Hodgson, 2010: 1). The application and usability of knowledge are thus central to the belief and value systems of epistemic communities, as are their interactions across transnational networks of knowledge production and policy transfer (Haas, 1992: 4). The ways in which disciplines such as behavioural economics, and to a lesser degree, psychology and neuroscience have been used to in contemporary statecraft is suggestive of a more or less coherent epistemic community. This definition is useful in unpacking the relationships between the epistemic communities which have been established around such specific disciplinary perspectives and emerging orthodoxies of what counts as evidence in psychological forms of governance.

The disciplinary evolution of behavioural economics has been essential to the emergence of psychological governance, first in the UK and USA and subsequently in other nation states and amongst supranational organisations such as the World Economic Forum and European Union. Its main claim as a departure from classical economic theory is that human behaviour does not fit with the abstract models on offer from the mainstream. Rather, humans are not as economically sophisticated as had been assumed; the extent of their rationality is limited and their decisions cannot be predicted by economic models alone. Only behavioural knowledge is fit to the task, and it is this kind of empirical economics which should inform policy, business practice and decision making.

There is a tendency amongst its most famous advocates to identify the origins of behavioural economics as recently as 1980s Chicago, through the work of Richard Thaler, George Loewenstein, Colin Camerer and Robert Shiller (Thaler, 2015; Sunstein 2015). In other ‘insider’ accounts, a longer history is recounted, traced for instance to a key encounter in 1969 Jerusalem between psychologists of judgement and decision making, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman (Kahneman, 2011). The latter was to go on to win the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002, and to play an important role in influencing many of the aforementioned behavioural economists at the University of Chicago during the 1980s. Certainly these figures have played crucial roles in the development and popularisation of behavioural economics as an epistemic community with vast impact on international public policy debates, not least through the publication of *Nudge* in 2008, which topped best-seller lists in both the UK and US. Author Richard Thaler, along with several other influential behavioural economists were invited to numerous seminars at the UK Government’s Cabinet Office, British think tanks, and the OECD, and Cass Sunstein famously went on to head the US Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs between 2009-2012, incorporating behavioural economic approaches into regulatory policy (Sunstein, 2011).

However by acknowledging the much longer history of the rise of behavioural economics (Sent, 2004; Jones et al., 2013; Schüll and Zaloom, 2011), we can better appreciate some of the internal wrangling which troubles the rather more coherent story offered by key advocates of the discipline. This wrangling is not merely academic but signifies something of the crucial politics of knowledge production associated with the rise of behavioural economics, which no account of psychological governance should ignore. Esther-Mirjam Sent (2004:

740-1) helpfully distinguishes between the *new* school of behavioural economics developing in 1980s Chicago and the *old* school of behavioural economics, primarily at Carnegie Tech during the 1960s, but also complemented by a more international set of research clusters at Yale, Michigan, Oxford and Stirling. As we have noted elsewhere (Jones et al., 2013: 4-5), the old Carnegie school was much more affiliated with the discipline of psychology than the new school which remained firmly footed within economics. Indeed key thinker on the concept of ‘bounded rationality’, Herbert Simon (1957), through his emphasis on our psychological limits and the constraints of the socio-cultural settings in which we find ourselves, unsettled the abstract models of classical economics well before the 1980s. Simon and the Carnegie school also seemed to pose much more of a challenge than new behavioural economics to the neoliberal economic thinkers who dominated the first so-called Chicago School of economics of the 1940s; figures such as Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman. Their position was that ‘real’ human behaviour, whilst important, was not knowable or predictable, thus making markets the best impartial arbiters of personal interest and economic transaction. By contrast, Simon emphasised that bounded rationality was an important or adaptive part of the human condition which directly problematised the notion that apparently neutral markets are the ideal system for correcting these errors and ensuring rational economic outcomes.

At heart then, there has long been a significant amount of disagreement as to the governance and political lessons one should derive from the behavioural economic principle of irrationality. Eventually Simon was to abandon his economic project and return to the psychology department at Carnegie (Sent, 2004: 742), and the ‘new’ incarnation of behavioural economics would not then emerge in earnest until the 1970s under the guidance of Tversky and Kahneman. Their work set out to identify patterns in the bounded rationality of human judgment and decision making; the systematic and apparently predictable mistakes which shape our behavioural repertoires. This is perhaps the main characteristic difference between old and new behavioural economics; for the new behavioural economists influenced by Tversky and Kahneman, the heuristics and biases were errors which should be predicted and rationalized. The ideal of rational economic man thus remains in place and it is the responsibility of governments to help people to achieve and manage their rational potential. The question of who determines what constitutes a rational course of action remains, of course, a moot point (Jones et al., 2013: 10).

Recalling the divergent origins of what has become to be known as behavioural economics in this way allows us to consider why the new behavioural economics of figures such as Thaler has had such appeal amongst policy makers favouring psychological forms of governance in the UK. In one sense, it offers a potential response to some of the most apparently intransigent of global policy problems (e.g. personal indebtedness, public health issues, environmental crisis) said to require a step-change in human behaviour and personal responsibility. And yet in another sense, psychological governance poses no threat to the established neoliberal economic order, since it supports marketized forms of individual choice, and light touch regulatory activity. It is precisely the non-interventionist tone of psychological forms of intervention that mark out the ‘behaviour change agenda’ as a fruitful and somehow politically neutral form of governance.

For Science and Technology Studies scholars and anthropologists also interested in the operation of behavioural economics as an epistemic community,

“[s]cientific debates over choice-making in the brain [...] are also debates over how to define the constraints on human reason with which regulative strategies must contend” (Schüll and Zaloom, 2011: 515).

Behavioural economics is infused with a distinctly economic account of biology, informed by a set of dualistic game theoretic accounts of internal conflict within the brain (fast/slow; emotional/rational; short-termist/future-oriented) (Schüll and Zaloom, 2011: 222; Pykett, 2013: 849). Such disciplines do not emerge in a social vacuum, of course, and the economistic bias of their biological and behavioural assertions also indicates the value ascribed to economic theory (historically above psychology) in public policy design. Economics is, after all an *applied* discipline aimed at modelling and predicting choice rather than representing it in a ‘purely’ scientific way. The field of neuroeconomics emerging since 2001 (using neuroscientific techniques and biological explanations to investigate and theorise economic decision-making) also has much in common with a behavioural economic concern for empirical/experimental methods and biological theory and a “split agency” account of the human self. And yet neuroscientists themselves more often contend that the brain is a holistic system which cannot be separated into discrete parts in the way that behavioural economists and neuroeconomists tend to do (Schüll and Zaloom, 2011: 523-4). But as Schüll and Zaloom

(2011: 531) point out, it is the “two-brained model” which succeeds in gaining policy traction, precisely because it does not challenge liberal democratic presumptions of individual freedom. Rather, in the new universal characterisation of human behaviour as driven by internal conflict in the mind, governance interventions need not interfere in the values and preferences of individuals. Rather, they can focus on providing the environmental cues or ‘choice architectures’ required to support more reflexive, rational, future-oriented, slow forms of cognition said to provide the best overall course of action. This explains why there is such a range of experience between different types of nudge. Certain nudges are therefore aimed at cultivating deliberation and rational responses, whilst others seek to by-pass conscious awareness to achieve rational responses through irrational (heuristic) means. Notwithstanding claims of the death of rational economic man, however, this position conserves the sense of human rationality on which liberal democracies are based, and thus fits squarely *within* existing policy making paradigms rather than posing a radical departure.

One point to take from this discussion is that the governance implications of new psychological and behavioural insights are not clean-cut, nor is their apparent novelty always as it may first appear or be narrated by its protagonists. So too, it is clearly important to distinguish between sometimes subtly different epistemic communities (e.g. ‘new’ and ‘old’ behavioural economics, neuroeconomics, neuroscience, or psychology) when describing the influence of particular forms of knowledge production on public policy. As such, this book is as much about the specific influence of behavioural economics on public policy (as popularised through such texts as *Nudge* and as produced through the popular imagination), as it is about other knowledge claims stemming from neuroscience, positive psychology, happiness economics and notions of psychological resilience and character.

Knowing the brain, mind and behaviour

In the next chapter William Davies extends the above discussion of the growing influence of neuroscience on the psychological governance of happiness, describing how a “neuro-industrial complex” (Davies, this volume) is intersecting with developments in affective computing to render happiness an objective fact to be targeted through new kinds of government and commercial intervention. In doing so he not only describes an under-

researched aspect of psychological governance, but also identifies a strategic alliance between neoliberal states and technology companies in projecting a political project which prioritises bodily measurement over the interpretation and discussion of emotions as culturally expressed ways of feeling. New forms of (scientific, economic, computational) expertise coalesce around the visualisation of happiness via technology, measurement and metrics – clearing the ground for new forms of psychological management and normalisation based on a “political physics” which bypasses philosophical, moral and political deliberation about how we should live. Davies’ concept of ‘silent citizenship’ captures this by-passing of linguistic, cultural, social and political referents and its replacement with naturalised scientific accounts of human rationality, decision-making, action and morality. Thus for Davies, the psychological governance of happiness proceeds by silencing the subject – rendering people’s own linguistic expressions of feeling as unreliable sources of expertise and evidence.

Yet as Davies also points out in his chapter, *talking* about psychology is in some senses, indistinguishable from psychology itself. This is a thread picked up by Sam Binkley, whose chapter similarly explores the psychological governance of happiness. He does so from the perspective of how the pop-psychology and self-help industries – key contemporary ways of talking psychologically about the self – have promoted the notion of happiness as a resource; a form of psychological capital to be maximised by enterprising subjects. These are citizens who are active, non-dependent, adaptable and perpetually changing; all characteristics apparently anathema with mutual forms of sociality and the welfare state. As with Davies, Binkley’s account develops an analysis of the strategic alliance between post-Fordist forms of neoliberal capitalism and popular psychological discourses which support the emotionalization of economic and social life. The epistemic community described here in the service of psychological governance is that of the relatively new discipline of positive psychology (since around 1997), the emergence of which Binkley describes in detail. Like Davies’ analysis of happiness and behavioural economics, Binkley is careful not to over-emphasise the novelty of such forms of knowledge but traces much longer-standing continuities and discontinuities in the discursive constructions of happiness and enterprise. Nonetheless, it is through these relatively recent scientific performances, practices and paraphernalia of positive psychology that happiness becomes a legitimate psycho-medical, scientific and public policy object. In the establishment of this discipline, which has aimed to

counter psychology's apparent fixation on pathology and disease, new justifications are provided for self-intervention, self-directed therapeutic activity and competition within the self and with others, in order to optimise one's own psychological capital and resilience. The counterpoint to these kinds of activities, Binkley argues, is the individualised sense of risk and vulnerability which necessarily accompanies the entrepreneurial practices of happiness optimisation; in a world of uncertainty, the "individual has only her own resources to draw upon" (Binkley, this volume).

In Chapter 4, Kathryn Ecclestone provides an in-depth account of this very individualised vulnerability produced by psychological forms of governance. Her account considers happiness and behaviour change as part of the governance of a wider therapeutic culture informed by discourses of wellbeing, mental health, character and resilience. She shows in particular how several successive educational, family intervention and parenting initiatives and policies in the UK since 1997 have targeted character, social and emotional learning, with a view to normalising "dispositions, attitudes and behaviours such as self-esteem, engagement, confidence, resilience, emotional management and motivation" (Ecclestone, this volume). So too, she argues that the behaviour change agenda itself is predicated on claims about the frailty of the human subject's decision-making capacities. Emerging from this agenda are a number of organisations (charities, campaigning groups, third sector organisations and consultancies) who make up a "therapeutic intervention market" who increasingly compete with more traditional sources of psychological expertise (educational and clinical psychologists, psychotherapists and trained counsellors) to provide often short-term therapeutic programmes and packages particularly in educational and youth work settings. Furthermore, this market, including public funding and state support for it contributes to what Ecclestone (this volume) describes as a "perception that psycho-emotional governance is necessary for functioning in a widening range of life situations". In other words, it universalises and normalises vulnerability and the responsibility to relate to the self as an intrinsically vulnerable, risky – and by consequence – anxious subject. Such introspection, of course, is entirely consonant with a social and political imaginary which marginalises structural explanations for poor mental health, welfare and wellbeing. Instead citizens are expected to psychologically adapt to, accommodate and 'bounce back' in resilient ways from the more damaging effects of neoliberalism.

Tools, techniques and expertise in psychological governance

Running through the chapters by Davies, Binkley and Ecclestone is a critical analytical framework informed by Foucault's writings on discipline, governmentality and psycho-medical expertise. Davies identifies a key disconnect between attempts to disciplining psychologically through enclosed spaces and institutions (via "the micro-political physics of the body"), and attempts to scale this up to govern the "macro-political physics of population" (Davies, this volume). This gap has been filled by the networked corporation and market techniques of surveillance and real-time performance management, buoyed by advances in digital technologies. In particular, wearable and affective computing devices which collect, store and visualise psychophysiological data pose novel ways of monitoring and maximising happiness. Key to the exercise of psychological governance in this case, therefore, is a set of technological developments which represent certain tools and techniques necessary for the practical workings of governmental power. Again this resonates with Davies' theme of silent citizenship and his contention, after Foucault, that since the late 18th century, we have seen a gradual and continuous shift from forms of political and moral order based in language, to one seen as derived directly from the physical, medicalised and naturalized body.

As something of a contrast, Binkley describes the tools and techniques of governmentality as operating precisely *through* language rather than circumventing it. It is thus through discursive techniques – ways of talking and writing about happiness as a cultural phenomenon – found in self-help literatures, life coaching practices and positive psychology as a form of expert knowledge and language, that the neoliberal enterprising subject is cultivated in the name of happiness. The happy enterprising subject works on herself and her psychological capital "on the basis of calculations of investment and return" (Binkley, this volume), and is placed in stark contradistinction from the welfare subject narrated as dependent, constrained and docile. One of the central techniques of happiness as neoliberal enterprise, as noted by Binkley and Ecclestone alike, is the reframing of psychological expertise away from therapists and into the hands of "any organizational director (teachers, Human resource managers, work-place counsellors) that inspires the self-motivated

individual to undertake a set of exercises and interventions into his own mundane thought processes”. Ecclestone in particular extends her discussion of the techniques of psycho-emotional governance with reference to the specific behaviour change agenda described at the start of this introduction. Her take on the nudge techniques pursued by the Behavioural Insights Team in the UK is that such policy tools are predicated on highly contradictory conceptions of the human subject. On the one hand, citizens are imagined as “subjects lacking essential psycho-emotional skills and capacities for an increasingly ruthless neo-liberal capitalist system” (Ecclestone, this volume). These subjects are in need of corrective forms of (non-) intervention which are not aimed at empowering, informing or educating but at by-passing such fragilities of decision-making. But on the other hand, nudge techniques retain a sense of optimism that the “two-brained” citizen will somehow resolve its essential internal psychological conflicts in favour of more rational and deliberative courses of action. Furthermore, the therapeutic intervention market to which Ecclestone draws attention, is based both on the theoretical splitting of the population into an ideal, functioning rational subject and his irrational, emotionally driven counterpart, *and* the normalisation of vulnerability warranting population wide governmental strategies.

The Foucauldian analysis from which concepts of normalisation, governmentality, discourse and discipline are drawn is further shared in chapters by the Midlands Psychology Group and Gillies and Edwards, who describe how psychological knowledge has been used as a form of biopolitics in behavioural health research and subjectification in family intervention policies respectively. In particular their chapters unpack the workings of psychological power and the role of measures and method in rendering psychological governance practicable. In “Psychology as practical biopolitics”, the Midlands Psychology Group, a collective of clinical, counselling and academic psychologists founded in 2002 by David Smail (who developed a social materialist approach to clinical psychology), describe how the psychological links method health and governance within the present neoliberal era. The chapter highlights how the measurement practices of psychology function to constitute individualised forms of subjectivity, set cultural norms relating to behaviour and the achievement of a good life, and ultimately determine “the right both to make live and to let die” (Midlands Psychology Group, this volume).

In focusing closely on one psychological study on the relationship between psychological character and a diet and exercise programme in Scotland, the chapter shows how psychometric methods and the performance of apparently neutral scientific evidence can reinforce a neoliberal vision of the responsabilized human subject within the realm of behavioural health policies. The critique here rests on a careful unpacking of the assumptions of a genre of psychometric studies which rely on self-report questionnaires and quantitative surveys as their staple methodology. The authors here cast significant doubt on the validity of such methods (i.e. do they measure what they purport to), their reliability (i.e. do the measures consistently lead to the same results), and indeed the quantification of human experiences and character traits through the kinds of psychological scales often used in health behaviour research. As such, as with the economic models of behaviour and decision-making provided by the behavioural economics described above, psychometric testing does not directly measure intrinsic psychological traits but rather *models* and indeed actively *constructs* such traits precisely through its own apparatus of measurement.

The chapter by Val Gillies and Rosalind Edwards likewise centres on the confluence of psychological method and knowledge with particular policy tools aimed at behavioural modification and risk prevention – in this case within the spheres of social work and family intervention. Picking up the theme of *character* developed in the chapters by Ecclestone and the Midlands Psychology Group, they take a more historical perspective in showing how a psychological model of character developed in the Victorian era as a way of “opening up mind and behaviour to public scrutiny, self-evaluation and redemption” (Gillies and Edwards, this volume). The early establishment of child protection organisations and welfare institutions in the 19th century, they argue, was suffused with images of sinful and degenerate parents, racialized and colonial depictions of children in need of help and ‘civilization’, and “child rescue narratives” based on the premise of children’s innate psychological plasticity.

Hence the exercise of psychological governance as a form of regulation of the social good through the minds and behaviour of individuals is held rather in contrast to the account set out by Davies (this volume) in which moral and cultural norms are side-lined by bodily and psychophysiological measurements purporting to get directly at a person’s state of happiness, desire, preferences and wellbeing. Instead in the case of the emergence of child psychology as a new discipline in the early 20th century, as Gillies and Edwards recount, it is specifically

moralized discourses of children's nature, potential and role in the British Empire that are mobilized in the justification of all manner of governmental interventions in family life. They go on to outline more contemporary resonances with this moralization, through an examination of political representations of the family and the construction of parenting and family life as a public concern since the emergence of neoliberal statecraft in 1980s Britain. Finally they bring our focus back to considerations of the role of particular forms of neuroscientific disciplinary knowledge and representations of the child's brain itself, as scientific justifications of policy initiatives including early intervention, the troubled families unit and family nurse partnerships. Once more, and in contrast to the 19th and early 20th century discourses on child development, psychological governance begins to circumvent political deliberation around the tenets of a good life in favour of biologized explanations for behaviour deemed irrational, unregulated emotionally or lacking in resilience.

Alberto Sanchez-Allred and Suparna Choudhury's chapter develops a number of themes raised by other contributions to the book, in a discussion of their ethnographic research on mindfulness as a form of 'neuroeducation' proving popular in schools and youth work in North America and the UK. Rather than signifying a form of psychological governance which eviscerates moral and ethical questions on the nature of the good life (as proposed by Davies and Binkley, this volume), they describe how the moulding of young brains through mindfulness serves to shape the brain itself as an ethical substance – a key target object for intervention in the resilience, regulation, executive function, emotional intelligence, wellbeing, positivity and character of children and adolescents. The resonances with the accounts provided by Ecclestone and Gillies and Edwards (this volume) are clear; new forms of pedagogical, therapeutic and neuroscientific insight being adopted as means to adjust children and young people to better withstand the demands of modern life. As such a specific decoupling of young people's material realities from their subjectivities is in operation (see Greco and Stenner, 2013: 59-61 for an extended discussion of the abstractive tendencies of happiness and subjective wellbeing as a *dispositif*). Rather curiously, one could say, these tendencies actually function through the re-association of emotional resilience and wellbeing with the materiality of the brain itself, or at least – crucially – scientific and biological representations of the plastic brain "as a site of relevant moral and pedagogical interventions" (Sanchez-Allred and Choudhury, this volume). Again ways of talking about and narrating the material reality of the brain are important in imagining what can be done to the brain and for

what kinds of ends. These very processes and mindful habits of thinking are significant in shaping not only forms of self-governance and emotional regulation, but are implicated in the processes of future-oriented and behavioural subjectification arguably at the heart of contemporary forms of psychological governance.

Conclusion: Is psychological governance ‘out to get you’ or a set of neutral policy tools?

In setting out the ways in which this book explores the tools, techniques, methods, forms of expertise associated with psychological governance in different spheres, as well as the kinds of knowledge of and epistemic communities offering insight on the brain, mind and behaviour forwarded by this phenomenon, we have proposed a critical research agenda couched in anthropological and genealogical perspectives on these phenomena. In this way we have tried to put into context the specific ways in which behavioural science, behavioural economics, neuroeconomics, happiness economics, positive psychology, research on emotional wellbeing, health behaviours and child psychology are constituted by some prevailing political, moral and economic norms. So too we have tried to show how in their application, they have constituted and affected policy-making, governance and statecraft at both national and supranational scales. And finally, along with the contributors to the book, our aim is to the implications of psychological forms of governance for subjectivity, citizen identity and social practice.

Yet in forwarding a critical perspective, we remain mindful of the need to avoid a sense in which the accounts provided here have recourse to privileged insight into how psychological governance is currently operative in places such as the UK, USA and elsewhere. It is important therefore not to suggest that such critical theories offer a ‘big reveal’ in terms of uncovering the ideological structures underpinning the behaviour change agenda, therapeutic interventions or psychological practice as biopolitics. It is necessary to acknowledge that both those actors involved in changing behaviour and those people who actively seek to change their behaviour do so according to their own normative values, reflections and critical rationalities – rather than blindly adopting the neoliberal imperatives so often spelled out in critical forms of analysis. So too, it is crucial to avoid over-inflating the achievements of

psychological governance, as if it is only a constraining and manipulative form of power with no recourse for contradiction, tension, conflict, resistance or progressive interpretation. As Cass Sunstein (2015, no pagination) himself as noticed:

“Some academic researchers are now falling victim to what we might call “the Behavioral Sciences Team Heuristic,” which measures the influence of behavioral science by asking whether the relevant nation has a Behavioral Sciences Team. That’s not the worst heuristic in the world, but it’s pretty bad, and it often misfires. Any such team may or may not be influential (it could even turn out to be marginal), and a lot can be, and has been, done without one”

For these and other reasons, the final chapter by Peter John offers crucial insight into the workings and remit of the UK’s Behavioural Insights Team itself, from his own perspective as one of their academic advisors. He demonstrates how new policy paradigms of experimentation, testing and evaluation have provided the behaviour change industry with an evidential standard which is much desired globally. This is reflected not least in the global consultancy services now offered by the BIT. In his chapter, John questions the very notion of psychological governance and instead sets out how behavioural public policy relies on some quite standard practices, routines and values associated with the civil service. Tracing longer running adoptions of social science in policy making in the UK, he finds nudges and other applications of behavioural insights to be transparent, publically debated and concerted evidence based. He suggests that it is still economics, and not psychology which has the most bearing on public policy making.

In some ways, this is a position not dissimilar to that adopted by many of the other book’s contributors who set out the historical confluences between psychological forms of knowledge and economic theory, method and political economy. In his chapter, John focuses on the empiricism rather than the political philosophy of behavioural economics as an intellectual venture, arguing that it is this empiricism which has most informed the behavioural agenda in UK public policy, and in particular its adoption of randomized controlled trials as a mechanism for researching, evaluating and developing new policy levers. From this perspective, then, there is nothing much transformative, let alone notorious or controversial about the BIT as one manifestation of contemporary psychological

governance – rather it offers a successful exemplar of efficient, tested and feasible addition to a more narrow and tradition set of policy designs based around simple notions of disincentives and incentives. As John (this volume) argues, “Nudge has been successful because it has worked within the existing agenda of state policies and according to the standard operating procedures of the bureaucracy”.

John’s balanced and illuminating account provides some level-headed and pragmatic conclusions to round off the book, serving as a useful reminder of the aforementioned “Behavioral Sciences Team Heuristic” cautioned against by Sunstein. And as contributors to this book portray, it is too simple to characterise psychological governance as either instrumental or ideological. Rather, through the fine detail of their analyses, they are able to shed new light on the precise epistemic, methodological, practical and political work that has gone into assembling the phenomena we are calling psychological governance. Yet it is only in taking seriously the contention that the tools and techniques of psychological governance are somehow politically and culturally significant that we can begin to respond to some of the challenges posed at the beginning of this introduction. For even instrumental and pragmatic solutions to traditional public policy problems carry with them particular assumptions, modes of working, rationalities, partial explanations, uncertainties and unintended consequences which require ongoing scrutiny – through academic analysis, media commentary and public and personal deliberation alike. Psychological governance is arguably neither trivial nor a radical threat to democracy, but like all forms of intervention (and non-intervention) requires justification, explanation and careful judgment. In its multiple manifestations explored throughout this book – its incantations to know oneself, maximize happiness, self-optimize, emotionally self-regulate; its behavioural modifications; and in its normalisation of particular forms of subjectivity, identity and social practice – the challenges of psychological governance and the place of the citizen in her decision-making environment remain important points of enquiry.

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